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ACLU Seeks Restoration In CIA-Censored Article

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American Civil Liberties Union attorneys filed suit in U.S. District Court yesterday challenging deletions the CIA ordered a former agent to make in an article he submitted for publication next week in The Nation magazine.

In the article, former CIA agent Ralph W. McGehee expresses his opinion that the agency is guilty of spreading "disinformation" and propaganda about the role of the Soviet Union and Cuba in El Salvador. The article is scheduled to appear in the April 11 issue of the magazine, which goes to press next Thursday.

The ACLU suit states that McGehee, like all CIA agents, had been required to sign an agreement that he would submit all writings to the agency for prior approval.

The right of the CIA to review and censor writings of former agents has been upheld by federal courts, most recently by the Supreme Court in the case of former CIA agent Frank W. Snepp III. Snepp had written a book critical of the CIA's activities in Vietnam and had published it without first submitting it to the agency.

ACLU attorney Mark H. Lynch said the suit filed yesterday does not challenge the right of the CIA to scrutinize the McGehee article, but

asks the court to review the individual deletions and issue an injunction permitting their publication. CIA director William Casey was named as the defendant in the suit.

The suit charges that "the censored portions of (McGehee's) article are not properly classified," and that the CIA's refusal to let him publish the sections therefore constitutes illegal "prior restraint."

A copy of the article, minus the deleted material, was submitted to the court with the lawsuit. In it, McGehee, who retired from the CIA in 1977 after 25 years of service, argues that the Reagan administration has used the CIA to help "deceive world opinion" about the nature of the conflict in El Salvador.

He suggests that the CIA has used propaganda to convince the public that what in reality is a native revolt against an oppressive regime is instead the result of a Soviet-backed international terrorist movement.

"Where necessary circumstances or proofs are lacking to support U.S. policies, the CIA creates the appropriate situations or lies whole cloth and disseminates its distortions worldwide via its media operations," McGehee wrote.

McGehee did not support his claim with specific information about the CIA's activities in El Sal-

able" instance of CIA deception in El Salvador has to do with documents obtained by the State Department which the administration has said proves that the Soviet Union and Cuba have been supplying arms to leftist "insurgents."

The former agent, although he offered no evidence, challenged the authenticity of the information, writing that "those happily acquired documents can be none other than the product of yet another CIA forgery."

Victor Navasky, editor of The Nation, said yesterday that the magazine will publish the article next week without the deleted material if U.S. District Court Judge Charles R. Richey has not acted by then.

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